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ABSTRACT

This unit of the Flexible Learning System (FLS) is concerned with the importance of play to early child development and with classroom conditions that promote productive play activity. Emphasis is put on developing skills in observing and analyzing play and understanding specific types of adult intervention in the play process. Activities and an accompanying color film, "Observing Children's Play," are designed to help adults develop specific play intervention strategies. Many activities require making observations from the film, a nonnarrated sequence of children in social play. (Observation forms are provided.) The unit is designed for use with a group of adults, to enable them to discuss why play is important for a child's growth and development; write objective descriptions of a child's play activity; determine when to provide additional resources; determine when to intervene, extend, or adapt the play situations; create a classroom environment to achieve a set of objectives; and determine when to participate as a co-player and when to redirect the play situation. Related FLS units: "Using Toys and Games with Children"; "Working with Children's Concepts"; "Managing the Preschool Classroom." (Author/SB)

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understanding children's play through observation

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THE FLEXIBLE LEARNING SYSTEM—COMPETENCY-BASED LEARNING UNITS FOR ADULTS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Understanding Children's Play Through Observation

by
Judy Brown

Drawings by
Carol Ann Ragle

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Far West Laboratory
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San Francisco, California

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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USING CHILDREN'S PLAY FOR LEARNING

by Judy Brown

monday
what did you do today?
I played.
tuesday
tell me about your day.
I played.
wednesday
what did you learn today?
I played!
I must talk to your teacher about all this play... you're supposed to be learning something!

Drawings by Carol Ann Ragle

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How To Use This Unit?

This learning unit in conjunction with the film "Observing Children's Play," was designed to be used in a group setting with an instructor.

Six to seven weekly training sessions are needed to complete the work in this training unit.

In your weekly training sessions you will: read sections of the learners guide; discuss what you have read, and view segments of the film entitled "Observing Children's Play." In addition, you will practice in the training sessions and in your own classroom various types of observation skills that will help you in understanding and using children's play.

OBJECTIVES

This learning unit is designed to help you use your understanding of play in your work with young children.

The unit will focus on the importance of observing children's play to help you better understand each child and to help you determine which behavior role as a teacher you should exhibit in relation to a particular play situation.

Training in this unit will help you to:

1. Specify at least 6 reasons why play is important for a child's growth and development;
2. Write an objective observation of a child's play activity;
3. Determine when to provide additional resources for increasing children's learning opportunities in play;
4. Determine when to intervene, to extend, or adapt the play situation to promote learnings;
5. Create a classroom environment which will promote play experience that will focus around a set of objectives;
6. Determine when to participate as a co-player and when to redirect the play situation.

Introductory Activity

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT PLAY?

Do you think children learn in play?

LOOK AT THE PICTURES ON THE OPPOSITE PAGE

Using only one word, describe the learnings you see possible in each play situation.

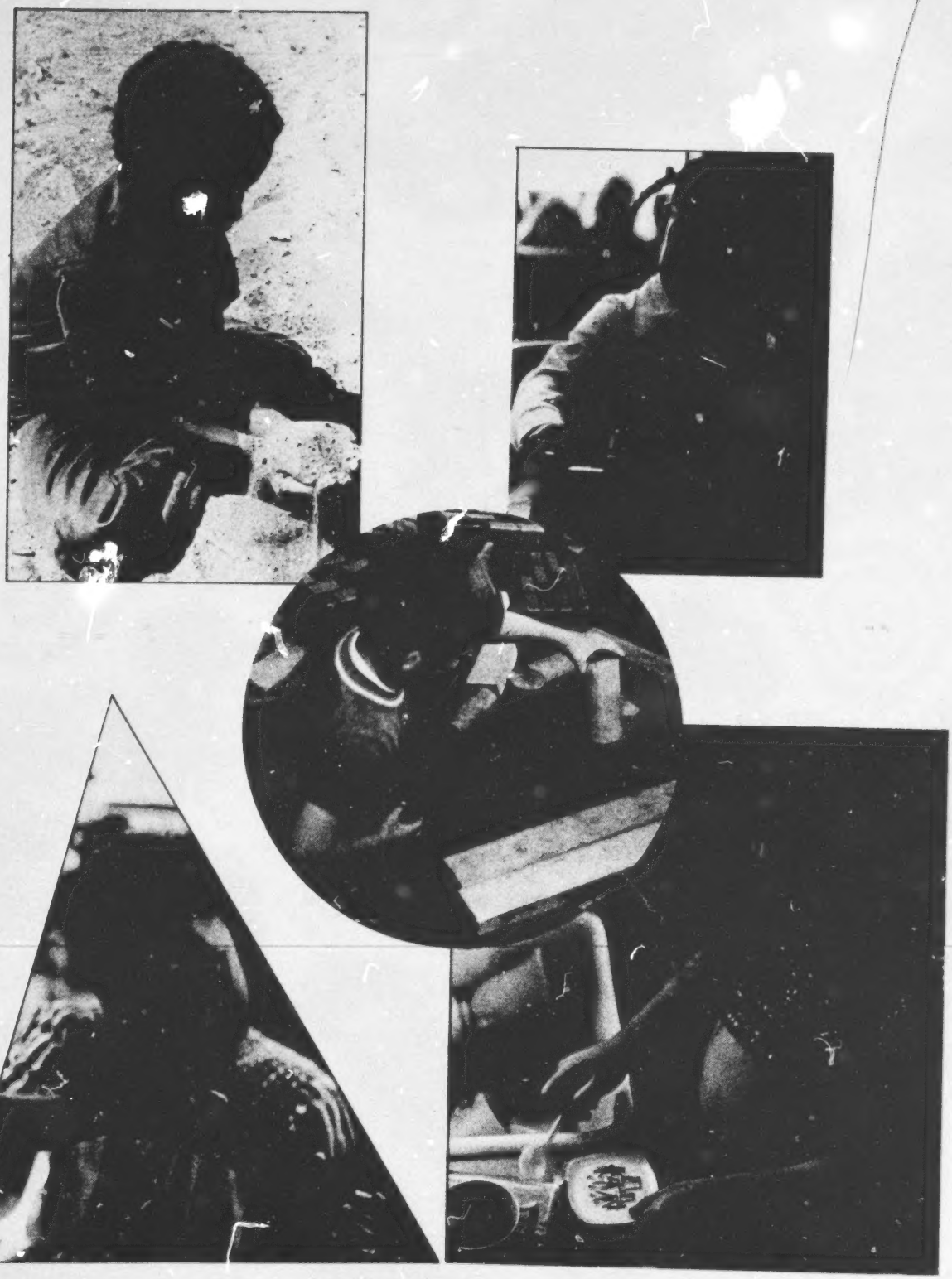
a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

e. _____



WHAT DO CHILDREN LEARN THROUGH PLAY?

Play is the natural way children learn. By exploring their surroundings with all their senses, children learn for themselves about the world around them. Play is a way of experimenting, of testing out ideas, of gaining knowledge in a non-threatening atmosphere.

When children choose activities that interest them there is no need for the teacher to worry about how to get them to participate. Children are involved because they want to be. They are active participants in their own learning.

Play involves:

testing -
exploring -
experimenting -
absorbing -
directing oneself -

Teachers who take advantage of children's play believe that a child learns best what he himself selects for learning.

BUT WHAT EXACTLY DOES PLAY DO?

Play:

Builds self-confidence

Children gain confidence through doing. In play, the child becomes the decision-maker. He can carry out trial-and-error activities without fear of failure.

Assists in the mastery of materials

The freedom of the play situation encourages children to experiment with a wide range of media.

Aids physical development

Develops strength and agility. The repetitive nature of play often helps children develop mastery of their own bodies. Children will drill themselves in some activities over and over again.

Helps children learn to relate to others

In play a child often has to wait, share, and cooperate with his peers. Through play children have repeated occasions for learning to respect other people and their property.

Encourages children to seek words to express their feelings and ideas

The interaction that occurs in a play setting supports the development of language skills. As children encounter new objects, events, and people, words come into use and vocabulary grows.

Reflects the child's culture, expectations, and values

Through observation of children in play, the teacher can learn more about each child's experiences and life patterns. Play offers the teacher perceptions and understandings about the child which might not otherwise be known.

Is a mirror of a child's world

Play can reveal problems, satisfactions, strengths and weaknesses, and give the teacher important clues as to ways the child is learning to cope with his feelings and frustrations.

Helps children understand their world

Through play, children often imitate and relieve experiences in their own lives. Most play is exploratory behavior; through experimenting with objects around them, by dramatizing and "trying on" the roles of those around them, children gain new understandings of how their world works.

WHAT IS PLAY?

Although there are many types and kinds of play activity, this unit is designed to help you improve your ability to observe child-initiated play so that you will be better able to determine appropriate teacher behaviors. "PLAY" for the purpose of this unit will be defined by the following illustration:

I think I'll play with this
fun box
this
this is fun...look at what I made from what I took out of the box!
why don't you play with this?
not this
okay

Response Sheet:

As you look at the illustration on the previous page, what ideas, concepts, distinctions about play come to mind? Write response below:

HOW CAN TEACHERS UTILIZE CHILDREN'S PLAY?

Most preschool teachers allow for spontaneous play during a "free choice" period. For some teachers, this period of the day is seen as a breather time - a time when the teacher can relax, take attendance, write notes to parents, work with individual children on "cognitive" tasks, or perhaps drink a cup of coffee. They see spontaneous play as a time when children can "let off steam," believing that this freedom will later allow children to attend to more intellectual tasks. Work and play are divided. Work somehow is equated with "hard" activities and play with "easy" or "fun" activities. Free play is not seen in these classrooms as a learning time.

We believe that young children do not need to be scheduled for "work" or "play time"; that the entire day should be a free work/play time, with children moving from one small group into another. This does not mean that the teacher sits back and lets things happen. The teacher who capitalizes on young children's spontaneous play must be able to determine how and when to change the physical environment to encourage spontaneous play; she must be able to determine when to participate and when to remain an observer; she must be able to support play by providing suitable resources and introducing new materials, experiences and information as needed; she must know when to ask questions and encourage discussion and also when to redirect play. In addition, the teacher must, above all, develop observation skills, as observation is a part of every role.

The remainder of this unit will concentrate on the use of observation of children's play to help you to develop the skills necessary for determining your roles and functions as a teacher as you interact with the play of young children.

Teacher As Observer

Observation is crucial to the teacher who utilizes the spontaneous play activities of children. From continuous and systematic observation, you can determine:

1. How each child learns; observation can provide you with information as to each child's:

   a. preferred sense mode
   b. preferred materials and activities
   c. development of gross and fine motor coordination
   d. development of visual and auditory perception
   e. attention span
   f. use of play medium
   g. willingness to join the group
   h. relationship with peers
   i. ability to tolerate frustration
   j. verbal ability
   k. concept formation
   l. individual progress

2. When to change the physical environment to encourage specific activities.
3. When to provide additional props.
4. When to enter children's play to extend learnings (by questioning, suggesting).
5. When to make additional information available to children.
6. When to remain <u>outside</u> the children's play.
7. When to "join in" just as a participant.
8. When to allow sufficient time for children to play out their ideas.
9. When to help children verbalize their understandings.
10. The effectiveness of your own teaching style.

You cannot observe all the children in your classroom at the same time. Even though you may casually observe children all day long, observations can be used more effectively only when you pay more attention to what you are observing for, and learn to keep some kind of record of your observations. Information gathered through careful observation of what children do, how they do it, and what they say in a play situation can help you determine what they are learning or have learned; it will also help you decide how individual learnings may be facilitated and what kind of experiences may be the most appropriate for each child.

Writing down your observations can be time-consuming, but these notes are important for the following reasons:

1. Written observations help the teacher become more perceptive; the teacher notices more details and is more aware of each child's needs.
2. Written observations are more dependable than memory; more specific information will be available to you.
3. Written observations will help to sort out your own assumptions, feelings, and prejudices about each child; you will be able to see his behavior and present status of development more clearly.
4. Written observations will help you plan, guide, and relate more appropriately to each child's needs.

Observing single episodes of behavior cannot yield the information and evidence needed to come to any conclusions, or even guesses, as to a child's pattern of behavior. Systematic observation is necessary. The more you observe, the more you will learn about each child and his own uniqueness.

In the recording of observations, it is very important to make a conscious attempt to keep personal feelings about the child in a separate

category and just record the behavior you have observed. For example, two different teachers observed Joanne and wrote:

Observation #1: Joanne loves to ride the tricycle and has been riding it all morning. Joanne is a shy, unsocial girl who does not like to participate in group activities. This morning she got off the bike and ran over to the 'puppet show' and sat down with the other children to watch.

Observation #2: Joanne has been riding the tricycle since circle time. As she rides, she constantly looks around; her shoulders are hunched. Some of the other children are sitting on the floor near the doll corner watching a 'puppet show' being put on by a volunteer. Joanne suddenly stops riding the bike, shifting her feet on the pedals. She gets off the bike suddenly, knocking the bike over, and with arms out in front of her, falls to the floor. Joanne then sits with legs folded beneath her and watches the puppet show, her face very intent.

Which observation gives you more concrete information, #1 or #2?

To develop good observation and recording skills, beware of tendencies to generalize and simplify! Try not to "fit" what you see into a description of what you think you know about the child. This does not mean that you are not going to make judgments about what you have observed; you are, for that is the purpose of observing in the first place. However, interpretations should occur only after you have accumulated enough information.

There are many different ways of observing and recording a child's play behavior. For purposes of this unit, the following guidelines will be used:

1. Decide on a focus - know what you are observing for.
2. Observe the child at various times of the day in various activities and situations (with adults, other children, alone).
3. Record episodes as completely as you can. What the child is exactly doing and saying. Include a description of the situation in which the child was observed.
4. Set up an observation schedule:
    a. when you will observe (how often)
    b. whom you will observe (e.g., choose 3 or 4 children a week).
    c. time for reviewing records; analyzing, sharing, discussing.

TRY TO AVOID:

1. Evaluative judgments when recording; e.g., "John is unhappy today."
2. Interpretations based on one observation.
3. Recording only appealing incidents (cute, amusing, sharing).
4. Recording only inappropriate behavior.

Activity No. 1 : Observing to Learn More About the Child

Part I

1. View Film - Part I of section entitled "Observing to Learn More About the Child." (The play episode appears two times on the film)

   A. First viewing - Just observe the entire episode to get an overall picture of what is happening.

   B. Second viewing - Observe the episode a second time, only this time concentrate on the boy wearing plaid Bermuda shorts. Select a focus before you begin.

      Example:

      a. development of gross and fine motor coordination
      b. absorption with materials
      c. relationship with peers
      d. ability to tolerate frustration

   C. Record on the Response sheet following (use "shorthand") exactly what the child does and says (where possible).

   D. Meet with other people in the group who have observed with the same focus and compare observations.

   E. As a group, try to interpret your observations.

ACTIVITY No. 1: Response Sheet

Learner's Name

Part I

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TRANSCRIPT OF FILM AUDIO

ACTIVITY No. 1: Observing to Learn More About the Child

Part I

Kush - the dark haired boy, wearing a red T-shirt and plaid shorts and,

Garrett - the light haired boy wearing the blue striped shirt and red pants are beginning to build in the block corner.

Alexander - enters the scene

K = Kush - dark hair, bermuda shorts
A = Alex - light hair,
G = Garrett - dark hair, long red pants

Kush: *We can make a design on it.*

No. Only one.

Wait, don't screw it up.

Come on, what are you standing there for, come on.

Alex: *What's these?*

Kush: *I don't know, don't ask me what they are.*

Alex: *What are you guys making?*

Kush: *A little house to sleep in.*

Alex: *Ha, ha, ha. That's not bigger than me.*

Alex: *I'm too little for that.*

Kush: *Ok, you want me to make it bigger?*

Alex: *I'm too big for that.*

Kush: *We're going to make a design on top of this - like that, see.*

We'll take some long blocks here, and then we'll cover you up.

Break it, right.

Garrett: *Yea, you'll break it getting out.*

Kush: *You better get out now.*

Garrett: *Yea, you better.*

Kush: *One for you, for you, for you, put it all over.*

Not in there you dummy! On top of this, not in there.

That's not a piggy bank you know.

Where you put toys in there, piggy bank?

Susie, um Susie.

Susie, Susie.

Dumbell!!

FILM ACTIVITY

ACTIVITY No. 1: Observing to Learn More About the Child

Part II

1. View Film - Part II of section entitled "Observing to Learn More About the Child." (The play episode appears two times on the film)

   A. View the entire episode the first time just to get a picture of what is happening.

   B. For the second viewing, concentrate on the tall girl wearing the T-shirt. Select a focus before you begin.

      Example:

      a. verbal ability
      b. body movements
      c. approach to materials
      d. concept formations

   C. Record on Response Sheet (use shorthand) exactly what the child does and says (where possible)

   D. Meet with other people in the group who have observed with the same focus and compare observations.

   E. As a group, try to interpret your observations.

ACTIVITY No. 1: Response Sheet

Learner's Name

Part II

TRANSCRIPT OF FILM AUDIO

ACTIVITY No. 1: Observing to Learn More About the Child

Part II

Kimberly, wearing the plaid jacket and shirt is playing in the house-keeping corner with,

Christine, wearing the yellow T-shirt and purple slacks. An older child from another classroom enters - she is wearing a white hooded jacket.

Kim: *Eat some, eat it with your fingers, eat it, eat it with your fingers.*

Mama, it's oatmeal in here, ha, ha, ha, it's oatmeal in here.

Ok, you want scrambled eggs right there?

Chris: *Applesauce.*

Kim: *I'm telling.*

Chris: *You've got to change clothes - we're getting ready to go somewhere.*

Kim: *Oh, guess what I got Christie D.*

Chris: *My purse.*

My name is Johnna.

Kim: *My name is Ron.*

Chris: *OK.*

Older child: *Your name is Johnna?*

Chris: *That's my play name, god!*

How old are you?

Older child: *Seven*

Chris: *Seventeen? I mean seven, you're seven.*

Grandaddy, where's my grantimole?

Mama.

Kim: *What? Wait a minute, come back to school.*

Chris: *This is my purse.*

Want to go to camp with us, want to play?

Older child: *You can*

Chris: *We're going to move.*

You have to leave the telephone here.

Older child: *Some clothes.*

Chris: *Those are real curtains.*

Older child: *Oh, real clothes?*

Chris: *Oh, you see, my teacher, she made it for us*

Older child: *How you know?*

Chris: *I thought you was fifteen. Kimberly told me you were fifteen years old.*

Kim: *Don't go in the playhouse.*

Older child: *No, seven.*

Chris: *I thought you were eighteen or older.*

Kim: *You can't play in the playhouse, four people are already in here.*

No, it's supposed to be two people.

Chris: *She can't play in the playhouse. No, Kimberly, she's just looking in the playhouse, Right?*

Kim: *Well, her have to look outside, out there.*

No, there, Mrs. Walters said only for people, then I am going to have to get out.

Older child: *I'm not playing*

Kim: *You still can't touch this, you have to touch this.*

Older child: *No it don't.*

Kim: *I got me some basketballs and some fruit balls and you guys, what you guys going to eat this? You guys gotta eat all this, you guys going to eat this and all my money I got.*

Chris: *This is gerbils, want to hold him*

Older child: *What is it called?*

Chris: *Gerbils.*

Kim: *By the time I get back the food better be out, and the house better be clean.*

Teacher As Organizer

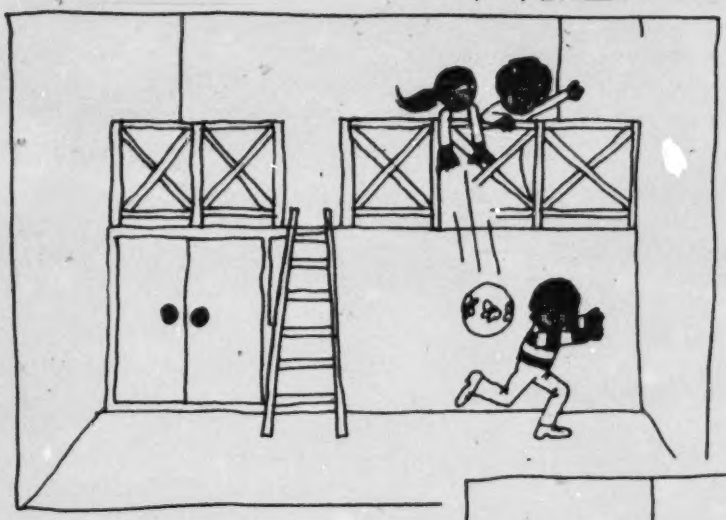
The extent of play activity exhibited in a classroom is largely dependent on how much the classroom environment makes playing possible. The types of play activity exhibited by children reflect their previous experiences and information.

You, as organizer of the classroom, play an important role in determining both the extent and types of play activity your children will experience. Children's "tools" for learning are found in their environment. By planning and structuring the classroom environment you can provide for new and varied learning opportunities. Organization of space, time, child-sized equipment, availability of materials all influence the play of children. The materials within your classroom provide the props for children's play. In and of themselves, they suggest topics and directions for play. If you want to encourage the development of large-muscle coordination, your classroom should have equipment that suggests use of those muscles. For dramatic play, the housekeeping area should have clothing, household items and child scaled furniture. To develop math concepts, the area should have objects to count and weigh, etc.

At times a teacher might want to create the conditions for promoting certain learnings. For example, if a teacher has assessed her children and found a need for experience and practice in classifying, she might plan materials in all the interest areas that lend themselves to this goal (lotto games in game area, pictures of different foods in housekeeping, etc.) By interacting with children's on-going play, the teacher might facilitate learning experiences in classifying in all these areas. By introducing new materials, equipment, and experiences, the teacher often can move play toward

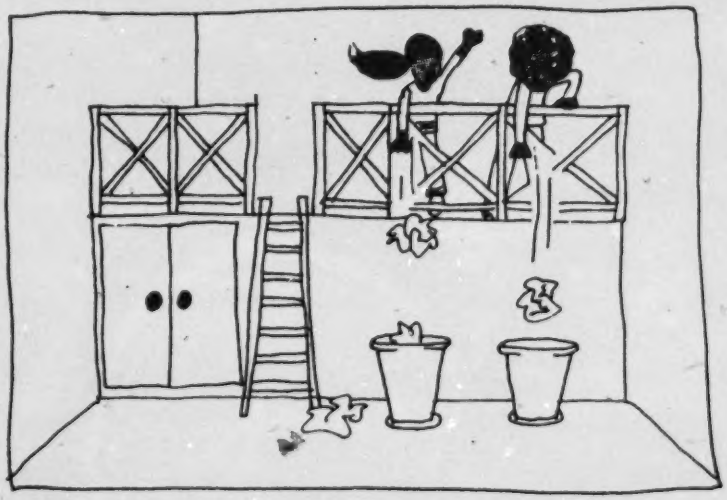
desired goals. The most important indication that you should add to, extend, or direct play in new directions should be the INTEREST AND NEEDS SHOWN BY THE CHILDREN.

One day Mrs. Smith had an idea on how to provide another center in her classroom.



The children soon discovered that they could throw objects down from the center and usually they were aimed at someone's head!

Mrs. Smith recognized the danger in that activity, but she was also aware of the potential of the activity so...she placed two large wastepaper baskets beneath the center and gave the children crushed paper to drop into the baskets.



Response Sheet

Learner's Name

What do you think the children could gain from this activity?
Write response below.

If the teacher is going to use this space, what else does she need to think about? Write response below.

Mrs. Rodriguez decided to move outdoors the dishes, dolls, and doll clothes that were usually kept in the housekeeping center. She also brought out some large plastic tubs filled with water and provided a mild dishwashing soap for the children to use.

Response Sheet

_____
Learner's Name

Do you think the children's play would be very different outdoors than indoors? Write response below.

What new experiences might they gain? Write response below.

Activity No. 2 : Observing an Area

1. Choose one area of the room to observe for the week (example, (housekeeping)
2. Try to "just observe" that area for at least 10 minutes each day (two times a day - 5 minutes for each observation).
3. Record what you see.

Try to note:

a. Kinds of play occurring each day. (Solitary, cooperative, on-looker).

b. How many different activities are taking place (use of different materials).

c. The children who choose that area.

d. How the children use the materials and space.

e. Play relationships (do some children always like to play the "baby" or "mother," etc.)?

Area Housekeeping

	Time	Children	Activity	Materials	Play Description
Monday	*9:30 - 9:35*	*Kim, Chris Tyrone*	*Cleaning the play house*	*Mop, broom*	*K-dressed as MO. in high heels C-FA. & T-Baby cooperatively sweeping, mopping, "cleaning"*
Tuesday	*10:15-10:20*	*Kim*	*Washing dishes*	*Soap suds water, sink & dishes*	*Solitary play - Kim is singing as she plays in the water*
		Ed	*Observing*		*On-looker*

AREA _____

ACTIVITY No. 2: Response Sheet

_____
Learner's Name

	Time	Children's Names	Activity	Materials	Play Description
Monday					
Tuesday					
Wednesday					

Time	Children's Names	Activity	Materials	Play Description

Activity No. 3 : Planning the Environment for Specific Learnings

1. Based on the information you have learned about the "area" you observed, develop a plan for structuring that area to stimulate specific learnings.
   A. Describe the learnings (concepts, social interactions, etc.) that you want the area to stimulate.
   B. Structure that area so that it will better stimulate such learnings (add materials, take away other materials, assign adult responsibilities, etc.).
   C. As you interact with children in this area, focus your intervention (when appropriate) around the desired learnings.
   D. Keep a log. At the end of each day, record what happens. You may use the forms on the following pages or create your own.

EXAMPLE

Date: *Monday, September 1*
Area: *Housekeeping*
Objective: *To help Ed play with other children*
To develop concept term "appliances"

Interacted With	Materials Used	What You Did	What You Think The Children Gained	Comments
Ed, Sue, Diane	*"Post-office" bag paper and crayons*	*Asked children if they would like to make telegrams (telling children that we would have a movie after lunch). Helped children decide who would make the telegrams and who would deliver. Set up structure and left group.*	*Sue and Diane made the telegrams together - helped each other "write" words. Ed delivered. Group cooperative effort, Extensive group dialog.*	*Ed seemed to feel very proud (judgment) to be the "mailman"*
None observed use of material	*Pictures of different appliances, toy replicas of appliances - sorting tray*	*Placed materials on round table in housekeeping area*	*Donnie sorted pictures of appliances into tray - she put all the irons together, refrig's etc.*	*Children use materials differently! Differences in conceptualization.*

ACTIVITY No. 3: Response Sheet

Learner's Name

Date:_____ Area:_____ Objectives:_____

Interacted With	Materials Used	What You Did	What You Think The Children Gained	Comments

Teacher As Provider of Resources and Information

Asking Relevant Questions

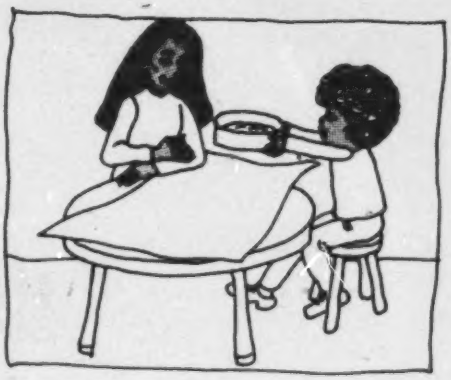
Teacher intervention in play does not always have to be planned. Through casual interactions with children you can expand the learning opportunities by relating questions to the child's choice of activity. Look at the play materials the child has selected and try to ask questions that will lead to discovery and exploration.

Listen to the child's questions, watch his use of play materials, and try to determine if the child is searching for information, trying to solve a problem, or simply enjoying his play. Try to relate your questions to the child's needs and interests.

When using questioning during spontaneous play, remember to keep the following criteria in mind:

1. The questions should relate to what the child is doing at the time.
2. The questioning should not interfere with the on-going play.
3. The questioning should not be threatening to the child who is being questioned.
4. The teacher should give the child time to think and should not answer her own questions.
5. The teacher should try to encourage more than a yes/no response.
6. The teacher should not ask questions all the time.

One day Gary was painting a picture. "I made pink," he suddenly exclaimed.



"How did you do that?" the teacher asked.
"I don't know, I was just painting," he said.
The teacher asked "Did you mix any colors together?"
"I mixed all the colors together."

The teacher asked, "What do you think will happen if you mix the colors again?" Gary decided to try to find out.

Question:

What was the teacher's role in this situation?

Activity No. 4 Observing to Determine When to Intervene to Ask Relevant Questions

1. View Film - "Observing to Determine When to Intervene to A[illegible] Relevant Questions" (The play episode is shown only once this time).
   A. In shorthand fashion, jot down notes on Response Sheet about what you see.
   B. Interpret the following questions:

Try to answer the following questions"

1. What learnings are occurring in this situation ?
2. By intervening, do you think a teacher might promote learning?
3. If so, what questions might she ask? List at least three examples of relevant questions you might ask if this occurred in your classroom.

ACTIVITY No. 4: Response Sheet

Learner's Name

Providing Information

Through careful observation, a teacher can learn when to intervene to make specific information available to the child, either to answer his own questions and curiosities or to provide a focus to provoke specific learnings.

Read the following play description and answer the question on page 59

During the outdoor play period, a small group of children were playing in the loose sand covering the play yard. It was a very warm day. The teacher suggested that it might be a good day to use the water pump, and work with the sand and water.

The children began to pour buckets of water on the sand. They were watching the water "make" streams and pools. The teacher brought over a variety of equipment--shovels, buckets, small boats, and molds. The children started to mix the water and sand together to build dams. The teacher suggested that they take off their shoes, and she brought over some plastic mats for sitting.

Two girls began digging in the sand, and discovered the adobe clay underneath the sand. They asked, "What is this stuff?" The teacher said, "Let me feel it. Do you have any ideas?" The girls said, "It is mud." The teacher said, "Yes, it feels like mud, but does it remind you of anything we use in the room? Try working with it.

The girls continued to dig in the clay and mixed it with water. One girl said, "It feels like the clay." Another girl said, "Because it sticks together in a round ball like the clay." The girl had molded her piece of clay into a ball. The teacher said, "Yes, it is a type of clay. Do you think you could use it like the clay in the room?" The girls replied, "We can make things with it." The teacher said, "I'm sure you can find many things to do with it."

The girls continued to work with the clay, filling the molds with it. They also discovered that the clay made a better dam than just the wet sand.

... children were playing in the... sand
... a good day to use the water pump.
what is this stuff?
let me feel it.
... they ... discovered that clay made a better dam than wet sand.

RESPONSE SHEET

_____
Learner's Name

Question: What did the teacher do in this situation to expand the children's play?

Activity No. 5: Observing to Determine When to Provide Specific Information

Part I

1. View Part I of section Entitled "Observing to Determine When to Provide Specific Information."
   A. In shorthand fashion, jot down notes about what you see.
   B. Interpret observations.

Try to answer the following questions:

1. Is there opportunity within this play situation for problem solving?
2. If so, what answers/solutions were tried?
3. From what you observed, what concepts could be developed/extended?
4. How would you provide additional information to children in this situation? On the spot? Later in the day?

ACTIVITY No. 5: Response Sheet

Learner's Name

Part I

TRANSCRIPT OF FILM AUDIO

ACTIVITY No. 5: Observing to Determine When to Provide Specific Information

Part I

Kimberly, plaid jacket and shirt, is playing in the housekeeping area and,

Christine, yellow T-shirt enters with a glass jar holding an octopus, preserved in formaldehyde.

Kim: *Come on Joe, you're supposed to be in the playhouse.*

Come on Joe, you're supposed to be in the playhouse. Sylvia, hey Christie, you're supposed to be in the playhouse. Sylvia, come to the playhouse.

Chris: *Who wants to see it again?*

Kim: *Me, oh is that yours?*

Chris: *No, want to open it? You open it, I can't open it. Don't let it go.*

Kim: *Where's it going to go?*

Chris: *It's going to jump out.*

Kim: *I can't open it it's hard. I am going to put it in my purse.*

Chris: *Do it.*

Kim: *Oh, this thing is nasty.*

Chris: *I know, I don't like that octopus.*

Kim: *Let me look at it over here.*

Chris: *No, get this and we can bury it.*

Kim: *I know what we need, a knife, get one.*

Chris: *Shake it up.*

Kim: *If we drop it, it'll come out.*

Chris: *Do it. No, you said it.*

Kim: *No, you do it.*

I am going to knock it down.

Chris: *You better not open it, I am scared of that octopus. They get around, they get to you, those octopus. They wont just stay right here on the floor, they will go somewhere else.*

It's going to get big.

Kim: *You're going to have to stay after school I bet.*
I am going to have to stay after school and it's not going to be funny.

Chris: *I am going to throw it.*

Kim: *OK, you're going to get in trouble.*

Chris: *Oh, it's moving.*

Kim: *Let's see, lets see.*

Chris: *First I have to shake it.*

Kim: *Oh, you almost dropped it that time.*

Oh, it's moving!

Chris: *If you just shake it, it moves.*

ACTIVITY No. 5: Observing to Determine When to Provide Specific Information

Part II

1. View part II of section entitled "Observing to Determine When to Provide Specific Information."
   A. In shorthand fashion, jot down notes about what you see.
   B. Interpret observations.

Try to answer the following questions:

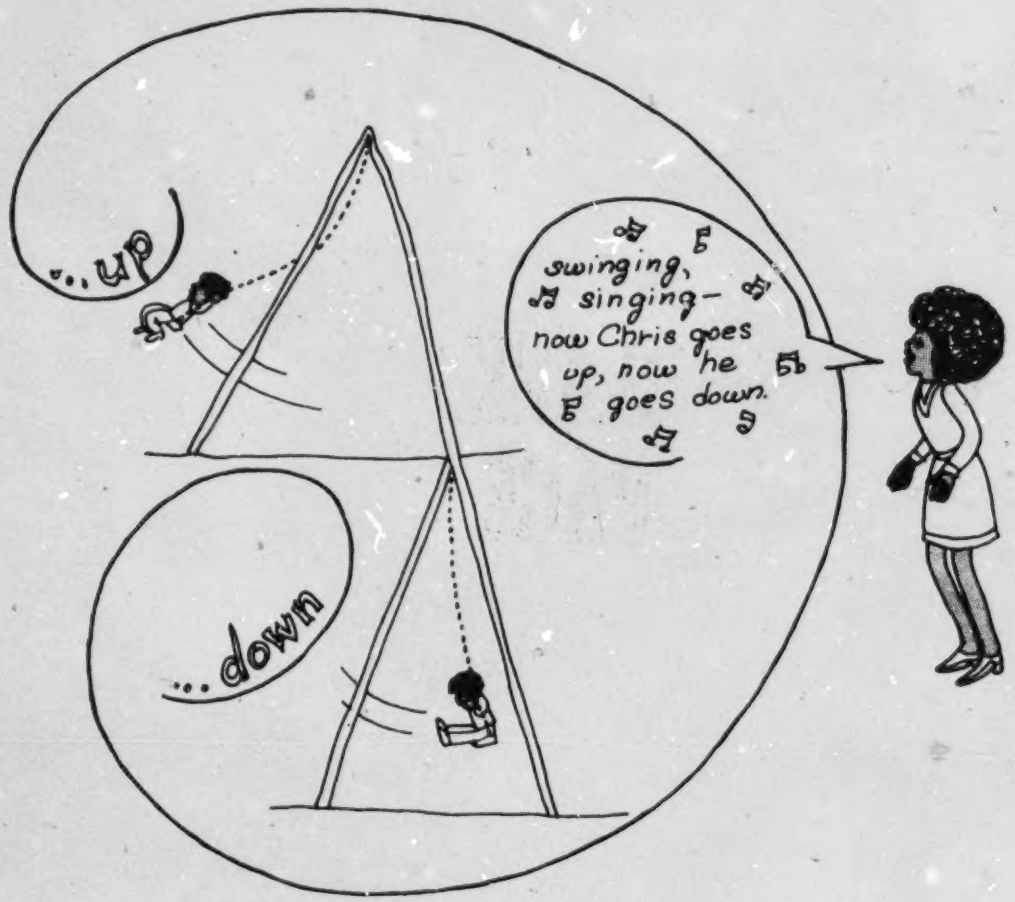
1. Is there opportunity within this play situation for problem solving?
2. If so, what answers/solutions were tried?
3. From what you observed, what concepts could be developed/extended?
4. How would you provide additional information to children in this situation? On the spot? Later in the day?

ACTIVITY No. 5: Response Sheet

Learner's Name

Part II

Another way a teacher can provide information is through the use of language - by telling children what they are doing. Helping children verbalize their understandings can expand the learnings inherent in the play situation.

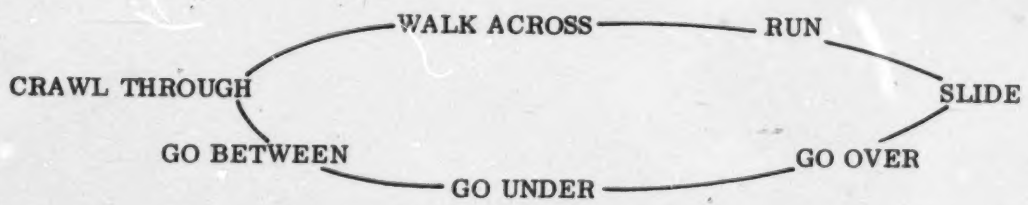


How simple and yet, how effective it is for the teacher to provide information when the children are engaged in an activity like swinging. In the above example, the teacher simply told them what they were doing--but the pay-off in language development is great.

Over and over again you can observe children walking across a board on two boxes, sliding down a slide, running, jumping, going over something and under something, around something or behind or in front of something. Sometimes a teacher will simply watch the activity without saying anything and then go in the classroom to teach language development. Try telling the children what they are doing and watch their reactions. Soon they will be telling you what they are doing. It is not necessary to do this every day, but some time every week should be spent this way.

Activity No. 6

Set up a simple arrangement on the playground that will encourage different kinds of movements that you can describe. For example, make a path to follow, lay a large board on two wood boxes about 18 inches to two feet high for the children to walk across and jump down from. Leave space for children to run to the next activity--perhaps another board to slide down or something to crawl through. Look for something to go over and something to go under, to go between. It can be a series of things that the children can do several times.



Set up the outdoor area and tell children what they are doing. Make notes on how you arranged the outdoors, what you used, and what happened.

* This activity taken from a paper by Glen Nimnicht, Sonja O"Keefe and Melva McCullough.

ACTIVITY No. 6: Response Sheet

_____
Learner's Name

Providing Resources

The selection of materials to provide in the classroom is crucial. The types of materials provided and their variety and quantity are important in determining what the children will select. Although you may have several objectives in mind when you enter into children's play, you should pick up each child's interest rather than imposing your own; follow the child's own way of learning and guide only when guiding seems desirable.

To expand on a child's interest it is often necessary to provide additional props. For example, if a child enjoys water play, you might provide: sponges, egg beaters, funnels, a collection of objects that float and that sink, dishes to wash, colored water (food coloring, etc.) and so on. The child can then be exposed to numerous concepts through your interaction. By responding to the observable play and by knowing your children's capabilities and intellectual stages, you can provide the learning experience that is most appropriate.

Sometimes a teacher will plan activities and materials that she might initiate, waiting to observe an appropriate time to introduce one of them. For example, if the teacher wanted to develop concepts about travel, she might intervene in the block area after observing the children "make a bus." She might also at this time provide additional props (e.g., play money, tickets, hats, etc.).

Activity No. 7 : Observing to Determine High-Interest Materials or Areas

1. List the major materials or areas in your classroom. Example: Blocks, Clay, Dolls, Sectional Trains.
2. For ten minutes during free play, observe at one minute intervals, how often children use these materials or areas, until you have collected at least 25 samples.

EXAMPLE:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Total
Blocks	1111	11	111	9
Clay	1	11	11	5
Dolls	1111	11	1	7
Trains	11	11	11	6
				27

3. Select the material or area that is most frequently used and list additional materials to add to the material or area to expand the child's interest in this area. For example, BLOCKS - add smaller table blocks, dolls, steering wheel, different hats.
4. Make a list of all the possible things you think the children may do with the different materials provided.
5. Observe the area and record what happens.

ACTIVITY No. 7: Response Sheet

Learner's Name

I. Areas/Materials	II. Number of Times Used
II. High Interest Area/Material	IV. Materials to be Added
V. Predictions	VI. Actual Consequences

Teacher As Participant

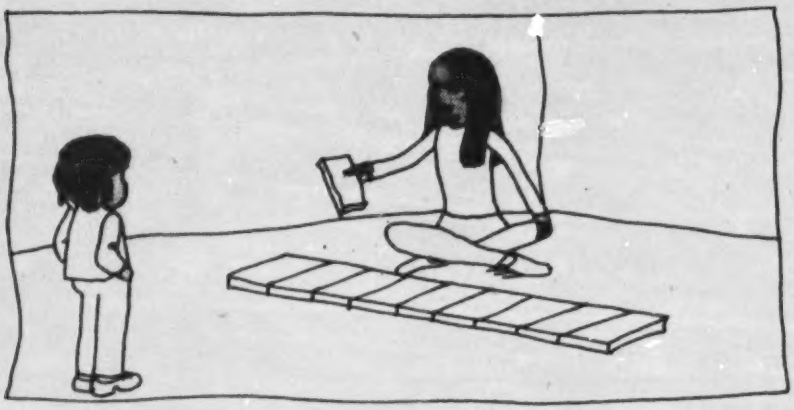
A teacher may enter in children's play as a participant to:

1. promote learnings
2. help a child enter a play situation
3. redirect play because of potential trouble
4. just enjoy the children

As a participant you should be careful not to take over the play situation to the extent that you are forcing your ideas on the children. If you join the children's play to stimulate and develop concepts, be sure that you are not so active that you overwhelm the children. Although certain kinds of questions asked at appropriate times will help clarify concepts, don't insist that the children pay strict attention to your questions.

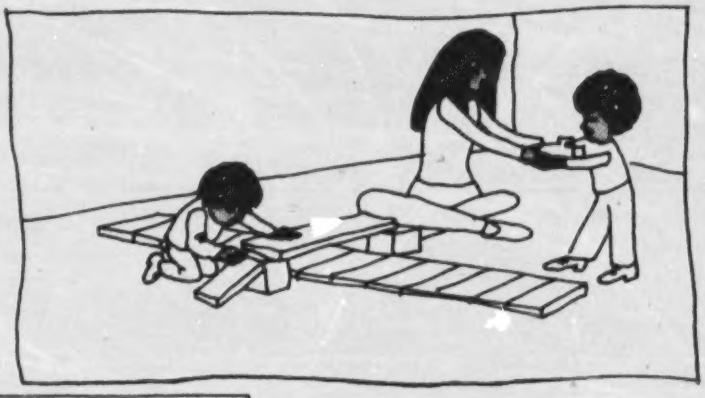
Children sometimes have trouble entering a play situation, either because the other children have excluded them or because the "play" is a new experience and they are fearful. For example, some children take naturally to blocks and start building with them as soon as they see them. Other children need help and encouragement. To get them started, you might sit on the floor and build with them, taking a block from the shelf and then asking them to get you another. Often it is necessary to remain a participant when children are entering a new play situation; they may not be ready to be left on their own.

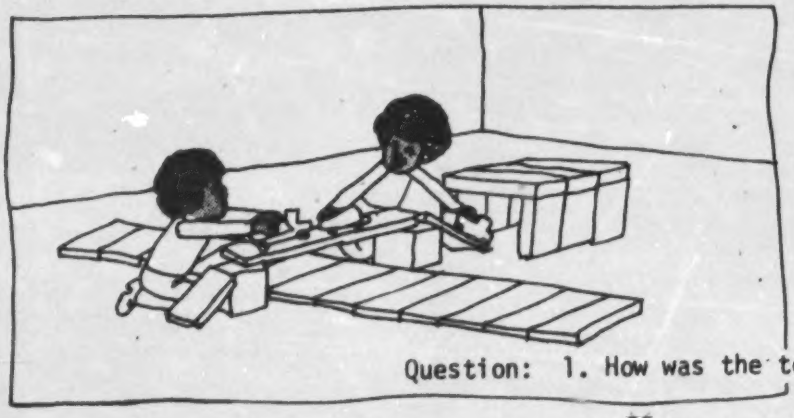
Christopher was having trouble finding an activity that he would get involved in. He was asking other children if he could play with them, but they refused to allow him in their particular play situation.



The teacher remembered that he had built a bridge earlier in the week. The teacher started to build a road and said, "Chris, I'm going to build a road. I remember you building a bridge. Would you like to work together, using the blocks?"

Chris and the teacher started to play. "I'll build the bridge from Oakland to San Francisco," Chris said. The teacher noticed Stephen watching their block play. She asked him to bring the small box of cars over to the block building. "Would you like to try our road and bridge? You can use the small car." Stephen readily agreed.





The teacher stayed with them a while, then left as the boys continued to play together using the blocks.

Question: 1. How was the teacher able to help Chris?

Two girls were playing "Doctor" in the housekeeping center. The teacher observed Kim watching them play, looking as if she wanted to participate. She also observed the girls beginning to fight over who was going to be the doctor and who the nurse.

"My little girl is sick and needs a doctor and a nurse," the teacher said, taking Kim's hand. "Bring her in. What is wrong with you?" the girls asked. "I fell down," Kim replied. The teacher asked, "should I come back later to pick up my little girl?" "Yes, come back in an hour," they replied.

Question: 1. Can you think of at least two ways that the teacher utilized the play situation to promote positive experiences for the children?

In the situation, on p. 81, the teacher had observed the children having difficulty because there was no patient and it was unclear who was going to be the doctor and the nurse. She also had observed one girl watching this play, noting that she appeared interested but unable to enter in. The teacher helped the girl enter the play activity, at the same time giving the other children the needed guidance and direction.

When a teacher has been watching the play of the children, she may enter as a participant because she wants to prevent trouble. The teacher may need to join the play to prevent problems when:

safety rules are being violated

children cannot get started, or have trouble finishing

arguments occur that the children cannot settle for themselves.

Activity No. 8 : Observing to Determine When to Intervene to Redirect Play

1. View Film - Section entitled "Observing to Determine When to Intervene to Redirect Play."
   A. In shorthand fashion, jot down notes about what you see on Response Sheet.
   B. Interpret observations.

Try to answer the following questions:

1. How do you think the light-haired boy is feeling?
2. How do you think the dark-haired boy is feeling?
3. Do they settle "the problem" themselves?

ACTIVITY No. 8: Response Sheet

Learner's Name

TRANSCRIPT OF FILM AUDIO

ACTIVITY No. 8: Observing to Determine When to Intervene to Redirect Play

Part I

Nigel, light-haired boy wearing checked blue and white shirt and,

Kush, dark-headed boy wearing the plaid shirt.

They are building with the blocks in the block area.

Later in the episode, they are joined by two girls and Ernest, the boy wearing the white turtle neck.

Nigel: *It's going to be for the rug. You could put another one on this end. Wooo, this is bigger.*

Kush: *Hey, not that, quit it.*

Nigel: *We can build a little house.*

Kush: *It's not a little house, it's a bigger.*

Nigel: *Yea, you can get in. Yea this is the front, you can get in there. Maybe I ought to drive something through it.*

Kush: *No, don't drive nothing through it.*

Nigel: *I'm not going to drive anything, I am going to drive it over.*

Kush: *Hey leave it Ernest, you're going to break it.*

Nigel: *And if you break it, you are going to get in trouble, huh Kush? If you don't fix it right, in the yard, we are going to beat you up; right Kush?*

Kush: *It's not finished yet anyway.*

But don't go through it everytime you're going to go through it, or else it's going to break because something's under it.

Girl: *Uhn, uhn.*

Kush: *See, look at that. What's that? It's going to fall down so don't go under it anymore. Go from this side if you want to go that side.*

It's not finished!

Nigel: *When it's finished, you can, huh?*

Kush: *Yea, you can play in it or do whatever you want to do with it.*

Girl: *We can knock it down, can we?*

Kush: *Yea, because when it's choosing time, you can choose block corner, because I'm going to leave this like this so you can knock it down, because I'm going to choose something else at choosing time.*

Nigel: *Me too, I'm going to choose too.*

Ernest: *Need anymore of these things?*

Kush: *Uhn, uh.*

Ernest: *Kush, need anymore of these? CRASH! ! !*

Kush: *Now, see what you did.*

Ernest: *You dummy!*

Girl: *You fat knuckle head.*

Kush: *You wrecked it down, now I have to make it all over again.*

Nigel: *I didn't try to knock it down. I tried to put this on.*

Kush: *I told you not to put it on.*

Nigel: *It's not your own thing.*

Kush: *You want to help me put this on, up, back together again?*

Nigel: *Yea, but this wasn't your own thing, it wasn't your own.*

Kush: *Yea, but I was trying to let these girls play through it. So why did you knock it down?*

Girl: *God you're dumb, that's what you are.*

Ernest: *Yea, you're dumb.*

ACTIVITY No. 8: Observing to Determine When to Intervene to Redirect Play

Part II

1. View Film - Section entitled "Observing to Determine When to Intervene to Redirect Play."
   A. In shorthand fashion, jot down notes on Response Sheet about what you see.
   B. Interpret observations.

Try to answer the following questions:

1. Do you think the boy really wanted the girls to keep knocking over his buildings?
   a) If yes, what did you see to support your opinion?
   b) If no, what did you see to support your opinion?
2. Do you think a teacher should have redirected this activity? If so, why?

ACTIVITY No. 8: Response Sheet

Learner's Name

Part II

TRANSCRIPT OF FILM AUDIO

ACTIVITY No. 8: Observing to Determine When to Intervene to Redirect Play

Part II

In this last episode we again view Kush building in the block area with the two girls.

Kush: *Come on, come on. Yea, if you want to go through, you can.*

Girls: *Yea.*

Kush: *If you want to play through it, go ahead.*

Girl 1: *Yea, let's play through it. CRASH!!! ha, ha.*

Kush: *You want me to make it again?*

Girls: *No, we want to make it. Right?*

Kush: *No, let me make it. I'm going to kick it down.*

Girl 1: *No, let's go through it.*

Girl 2: *Yea.*

Kush: *Not yet.*

Girl 1: *Yea, yea, yea. No I want to go through it. Yea, and then kock it down and kick it and knock it down.*

Girl 2: *I'll kick this side and you kick that side, right?*

Kush: *This is going to be a different one.*

Girl 1: *Can I go through it?*

Kush: *Not yet, It's gooder. Now that it's wider so people could go through it.*

Girl 1: *Now I'm going around like that.*

Girl 2: *Let's kick it.*

Girl 1: *Not yet.*

Not yet he said.

Kush: *It's not through, not yet.*

Girls: *OK, can we kick it?*

Kush: *Not yet. I've got to put a long one on top of it.*

Girl 1: *Goodie, Goodie.*

This is a cute little building, let's not kick it up.

Right.

Girl 2: *Yea.*

Kush: *No, take that off.*

Kush: *Don't knock it down, that's the only thing I don't want you to do, knock it down.*

Kush: *Don't knock it down!*

Girl: *I'm going to knock it down.*

Kush: *I'm not going to be your friend.*

Girl 1: *Can we knock it down?*

Girl 2: *No, no, no, he said we shouldn't he said we can't.*

Girl 1: *I want to knock it down.*

Girl 2: *Alright, let's go.*

Kush: *Again you want me to make it yea, yea? Oh boy, now I going to make the house all over again, all over again, all over again.*

Activity No. 9 :

For the next two days, look for opportunities to interact with children during their play.

At the end of each day, describe the situation - what role you took and what happened when you intervened.

Example Situation	Role	Consequence
Monday *Tim and Nat were building with the blocks and had constructed a very tall building. I noticed Patrick watching their play all morning. He seemed very interested in what they were doing (judgment)*	*Participant* *I asked Pat if he would like to build a tall building with me.*	*As we started to build next to him and Nat, they asked if we could build a bridge between the two buildings. As they began to do this, I left and the three continued without me.*

ACTIVITY No. 9: Response Sheet

Learner's Name

Situation	Role	Consequence

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